

# Working from Home



## Advice on setting up a Workstation with Computer or Laptop at Home

Working from home presents us with an increase of developing posture related tensions and strains, as many DSE users do not have a designated desk at home which offers enough space, adequate height and leg room. Also, most do not have access to an adjustable office chair nor foot rests.

General and widely accepted advice and guidance about avoiding long hours of uninterrupted sitting, even if the adopted posture is near enough perfect, still apply.

### **‘Your best posture is always the next one’.**

Below, you find some suggestions which may be helpful, but it is advisable to also try and find your own way, as the set up will have to suit you and feel comfortable. It can also be good to change seats and postures over the day, and to do some work standing up, or reclining in a comfy chair. Why not lie down a bit to listen to a podcast (as long as you don't fall asleep). Voice activated software can also be a very useful tool to help with typing.

A headset can help for phoning and when attending meetings over online channels or to listen and watch instructions over video in a more relaxed position. If you do not need this privacy, consider using a blue-tooth speaker.

## Room

If you can, choose a quiet space other than your bedroom with good adjustable lighting and curtains or blinds. Keep it as a designated work space. If this is not possible, maybe build a little ‘booth’ using foldable screens, blanket curtains or furniture partitions. Be creative, and make it ‘your own’, because the stress from being frequently interrupted could also manifest as physical tension.

## Suitable tables - desks

Choose a table which offers enough space for a screen/laptop and an extra keyboard and a mouse plus enough leg room. The mouse could also be placed on a smaller table beside or a covered, stable open drawer.

The height of the desk should not be higher than your elbows when seated (or standing) – generally it is easier to key in a lower rather than too high position, if working from a laptop only, then tilt the screen backwards in order to avoid looking down at it. For manual writing you can lean on the desk for a while (with the chair slightly pushed back), as long as it is not for too long.

A low table can be adjusted with stable blocks underneath its legs to raise it. They can be bought online.

Try to avoid having to eat and drink at the same table, as your computer will be at significant risk, and replacing such items currently causes severe disruption and stress.

## Chairs – seats

Ask if your office chair can be delivered to you, or if you can pick it up (take some helpers), but beware that a chair which has castors for hard carpet may be too slippery on modern vinyl or wood floorings; use a rug with a non-slip mat under if this is the case.

Adjust the chair and its back and arm rests to your height first, but also to your table height. A sturdy fruit box, turned upside down, can make an effective footrest, if required.

### **If you are using a normal chair:**

Adjust the height by using folded blankets or a flat or a wedge cushion.



To support your back in its natural curve try placing a small cushion, rolled cardigan or towel in your back, should the backrest not feature any lumbar support. A so called wobble cushion (an inflatable plastic/vinyl disc like a flat ball) can sit on the chair very securely and allows similar tilting motions which encourage active sitting almost like an ergonomic chair. For reading only, or very little use of the keyboard, sitting reclined in an armchair with the laptop on a lap-tray can be quite a nice alternative for a while.

Avoid hunching over the desk or laptop, it is better to recline and slouch healthily that way (have a cushion or rolled cardigan in your lower back – simple lumbar foam rolls with attachment straps are readily available online).

### Mouse or cursor device

Beware the laptop scroll pad or red middle navigation button, as they cause enormous tension in your shoulder.

Learn shortcut keys for frequently used mouse commands or adjust the setting to use the number pad instead: <https://www.microsoft.com/accessories/en-gb/support/hardware-tips-and-tricks>

The mouse can be kept lower than the desk, as long it is close-by, for example on a wide armrest or by-table.

A simple wireless mouse is best, which can be a vertical mouse. If cabled, make sure the cable is long enough. A cursor device allowing a quick change from right to left hand use can also be very useful.

The less cables on your desk, the tidier and more flexible it is.



### Screen height and distance

Simple boxes can be used to raise screens or laptops should an external keyboard and mouse be used as well. Ensure good ventilation under the laptop to avoid overheating. Place the screen directly in front of you.

Adjust the top level to your eye-line if you can, or at least tilt the screen to meet your gaze.

Keep the screen at a maximum distance of an arm length or less if the icons are small, and wear appropriate glasses if needed. Avoid varifocals for screen work, as they do not allow you to navigate with your eyes.

Take frequent eye rest breaks by gazing into the distance, do some eye exercises to get used to navigate with the eyes and not the neck.

This is also important if you use two screens: place them either in an open angle in front of you, or have the more dominant one opposite you, and the other one to the side of it – glance sideways – maybe changing sides at times.

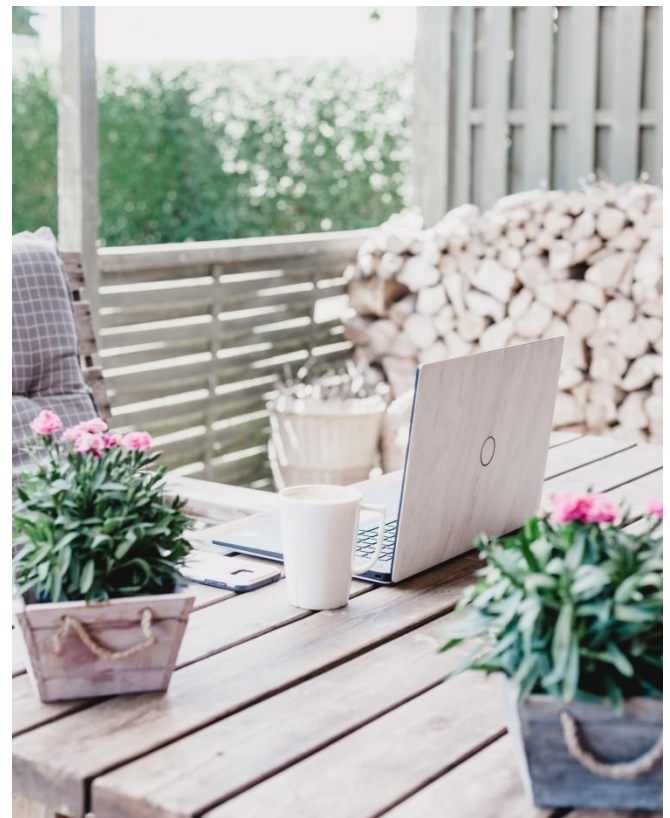
### Laptop users

Be mindful of the heat which a laptop emits, and ensure good ventilation under it. Egg cartons work well for this. (Staple a few lower egg compartments together).

External wireless keyboards and a wireless mouse are useful to buy.

Fruit boxes, paper reams, egg cartons or laptop raisers are useful additions to adjust screen heights; avoid holding the laptop or having it straight on your thighs.

### Last-- not least



Try to focus on the perks that working from home can offer like using outdoor spaces, taking breaks when needed, saving travel time and thus often reducing your carbon footprint – **and have more quality time for yourself.**